

**ST. LOUIS ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT**

# **ESPRIT**

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August 2000

## **Middle Mississippi Coordination Trip**

August 2, 2000 launched a two-day environmental research trip of scientists and engineers from across the state and across the U.S. The Corps of Engineers joined environmental experts from U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Illinois Department of Conservation and several other environmental agencies in an information sharing barge journey.

The Middle Mississippi Coordination trip is an annual event which main goal is to bring river colleagues together to focus their endeavors on keeping the river environmentally, navigationally and recreationally viable. This



Photo of Mississippi River at Pool 26

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## Commander's Perspective

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*Together we can make a difference.*



**COL Michael R. Morrow**

I have received many comments regarding my Commander's Perspective in the June issue of the Esprit, where I challenged all of you to tout our quality projects, our admirable environmental record, and our service to the nation to your friends, neighbors and families. I appreciate your input and encourage your continued support. One comment I received mentioned that environmental stewardship is measured by what is accomplished, not by what is said. There have been many voices lately talking environmental issues, however one voice has been prominently absent, ours.

I am proud to be part of a water resource agency with a history of environmental achievements, as evidenced by our Environmental River Engineering Program, Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Projects, and Environmental Pool Management Plan. Our critics know that it is difficult for us to challenge issues to which the general public feels an emotional connection. Our often technical, sterile and straightforward approach of providing engineering assessments, benefit-to-cost ratios, assurances of integrity, and environmental soundness is no match for highly emotional allegations of harm to the environment, degradation of the river, and threats to endangered species. Emotional issues generate press coverage; engineering reports generate technical reviews.

In order for us to provide quality service to the nation, it is crucial that we gain and maintain the public's trust and confidence. The integrity of our processes must emulate our personal integrity and commitment. We need to tell our story in a most professional fashion. We must actively counter sources of misinformation, and raise the bar on media accountability. We need to be as active in advocating for the river and water resources as our critics are. To do this, we need an aggressive, honest and informative public awareness program.

I am directing the Public Affairs Office, in coordination with Information Management and Project Management Divisions, to spearhead an initiative to improve the public's knowledge and perception of the District and the Corps of Engineers. This initiative will involve redesigning the District's web site to include information and updates on all of our projects, a section devoted to debunking misinformation, and the electronic posting of all newspaper articles about the District, along with our responses. We must also connect with the media. We will be inviting reporters to our project sites and sending articles to local papers and professional publications. Look for these changes to start by the end of September. Together we can make a difference.



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
St. Louis District

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# News Briefs

## Wappapello Lake:

### Career Camp

The Natural Resource Career Camp is a three year phased program, organized as a joint effort by multi-federal and state agencies. Due to its success, this program has now become statewide and geared toward all minorities. Support of this program has enabled all agencies involved to seek growth opportunities through investing in people and reshaping culture by creating the opportunity of job diversity in the field of conservation and natural resource management. This multi-agency partnership has aligned for success by combining its efforts in reaching these students.

The St. Louis District has seized the opportunity by designating Park Ranger Andrew Jefferson as the District's liaison at Wappapello Lake. The in-kind services consist of interpretive programs, guided five-mile hikes and canoe training for the students. These services are provided in lieu of monetary funds. On 15 July 2000, Park Ranger John Daves and Ranger Trainee Joseph Head provided a canoe-training course for 20 Natural Resource Career Camp students at Wappapello Lake. Mr. Daves also gave a presentation on Water and canoeing Safety to the entire group of students. On 17 July, Natural Resource Specialist James Gracey and the Johnson Tract Natural Area. On 20 July, Park Ranger Trainee's Kathy Dickson and Jamie Burge conducted interpretive programs on water safety and Natural

Resource Management for the Natural Resource Career Camp Students at Puxico, Missouri.

### Ranger Willie Does it Again

On 1-2 July 2000, Ranger Willie's Wet'n Wild Waterfest 2000 was held at the Redman Creek Beach with an attendance of 700 visitors. This year's event boasted many exciting activities such as racing Canoes, Inner Tubes, Life Jacket and hand made Cardboard



Boats. Games like a Water Balloon Toss, Beanbag Toss, Tug of war, Blind Water Balloon Volley Ball, a Watermelon Eating Contest, PFD Fashion Show, Talent Show and a Sand Sculpture Contest were also done. To further enhance the event, a puppet show given at the Visitor Center on both days to. Many prizes were given away and again this year we waived the Use-Fee at Redman Creek Beach for both days so that all could enjoy. This event was sponsored by the Southeast Missouri Regional Water Safety Council (SEMO).



Children enjoying tube race during the festivities

### Morgan honors Frank Jansen

by Lattissua Tyler

After years of service with the Highway Patrol, Frank Jansen, one of the Corps of Engineers biggest fans retired, but only from his line of duty. Frank Jansen's love for the river, the Corps and our work continued. Living just above Lock 24, Frank would take pictures of every boat that passed his home. His collection of pictures, which spans over several years, filled a full photograph album, one of his treasured possessions.

On July 27th, Chris Morgan, Lockmaster of Lock and Dam 24 in Clarksville, Mo., visited Mr. Jansen in his home and awarded him a certificate for being an "official river watcher" along with other gifts of appreciation. Sadly to say, Mr. Jansen who suffered from cancer passed away just six days after Chris Morgan's visit. But in honor of his dedication to raising his own awareness of the river, upon approval from the executor of his belongings, plans are being made to place his treasured photo album in the Alton River Museum.





# August Employee of the Month is a Life Saver

by Chris Morgan and Terrie Hatfield



On Monday, 3 July, as the M/V Mary Evelyn was locking southbound at Locks & Dam 24, one of her mates was on the head of the second cut as it prepared to move out of the chamber to connect with the first nine barges below the Miter Gates, when he slipped into the river between the barge and lock wall. As anyone who has ever watched a tow lock through knows, the space between a barge and the wall is extremely narrow. The deckhand on the first cut yelled out “Man in The Water”. Lock Operator Bernie Clover immediately grabbed the safety block and rushed to lower it between the barge and the lock wall to protect the endangered crewmember. The deckhand was scrambling to duck into a recess void for protection. Bernie’s quick thinking prevented a potentially fatal accident. He instructed the towboat Captain of the man’s location, enabling him to hold the head of the tow off the landside lock wall. The now soaked individual was directed and assisted to safety and returned to his boat in one piece.

Bernie likes his job—so much, in fact, that he married his wife, Debbie, right in the Lock 24 park gazebo. During the ceremony he was hailed by whistles from a passing train to the

West and horns from a tow locking to the East. Not only did he celebrate his new marriage, he also, after many years of working on the river, took on a land locked position.

On those beautiful not-too-hot sunny days, the life of a Lock Operator appears to those of us who are office-bound, to be a great way to earn a living. To a cubicle dweller, the opportunity to be outdoors and on the river in a rural setting appears exciting, fun, and relaxing. This is true, when the weather cooperates, but there is much more to this job than first meets the eye. First, there is, of course, the work. One had better know what he or she is doing and be ever watchful of potential danger. Throw in a midnight shift, or, better yet, changing shifts every two weeks so your body clock never gets regulated, no flex time or AWS, working weekends and holidays, howling January winds,

sub-zero temperatures, ice covered walkways and rails, and the work still must go on. Add to that the necessity of always keeping eyes and ears open for danger, not only for yourself, but also for all those working around you, and remembering to always use extreme caution. Take nothing for granted. There is a very good reason why a Tow Haulage cable snapping and lashing across the walkway is called a guillotine. No one wants to become a statistic.

With increased river demands, the dangers are increasing with continual lockages. The old parts of the navigation system were designed and built by engineers who could not have imagined just how well the system would grow. They would not be able to fathom the tonnage that would pass through these walls 60 years after completion. The locks are performing nearly impossible tasks. 98% of tows locked through the entire system daily are twelve hundred foot tows. The pilots are steering 105 ft wide grain

*(Continued on page 7)*



# OLE; Getting the Lead Train Out of the Station

by Marc Kodack

Ever sit face to face, knee to knee with someone and with a straight face parrot back to them exactly what they are saying to you? Ever regularly explore your emotional state with others you work with? These and many other experiences are available in the Organizational Leadership for Executives (OLE) and the Leadership Education and Development-Train-the-Trainer (LEAD-TTT) courses. Three members of the St. Louis District team, Marc Kodack (ED-Z), Mike Thompson (PM-N), and Lloyd Coakley (ED-HP), attended OLE in May 2000 in Kansas City. Marc Kodack then attended the LEAD-TTT course. I briefly describe each course, the goals, and my experiences. I highly recommend both classes.

Organizational Leadership for Executives (OLE) and the Leadership Education and Development-Train-the-Trainer (LEAD-TTT) are primarily offered in Kansas City, Missouri, but also are available at other locations throughout the U.S. The courses are sponsored by the Center for Army Leadership's Civilian Leadership Training Division based at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The OLE class is two weeks long and provides an opportunity to

prepare Army employees for leadership and management responsibilities. There is no grade restriction on who can attend OLE. However, new managers are given first priority. The LEAD-TTT class is also two weeks in duration and provides both Army civilians and military members the opportunity to become certified facilitators for the Leadership Education and Development course. Once certified, individuals are qualified to facilitate a LEAD course anywhere in the Army.

Funding for Corps participants in OLE is split between Headquarters and an individual's home station. Travel and per diem are funded by Headquarters, whereas salary is funded by the home station. The same funding split applies to LEAD-TTT. Successful completion of both courses depends on attending all the sessions, completing all homework, and participating in a weekend group exercise.

The OLE course provides a comfortable and "safe" environment within which to work with other individuals drawn from the Army's highly diverse organization, to understand how organizations function by understanding the people that work there, and to learn about yourself. OLE stresses the need for leadership skills at all levels within an organization and that understanding organizational processes and individual emotions are as equally as important as completing a specific task. The level and quality of internal communication, and outside factors are also important to consider because of their potential to adversely affect an organization.

All three of the St. Louis District OLE attendees learned a great deal about

themselves and how they interact with others. We also enjoyed meeting other people from elsewhere in the Army and took advantage of the opportunity to establish new friendships. Attending the OLE was a very worthwhile, if intense, two week experience.

The LEAD-TTT course provides the participants a chance to experience the LEAD course as if they were a student (Week 1) and then experience the LEAD course as a facilitator (Week 2). The role of a facilitator is to assist students in understanding the course material using group-based experiences where each member has a role to play. Allowing students to work together to reach their own decisions is critical if the students are to learn the basics of leadership and something about themselves, all in a single week. A facilitator should avoid lecturing to the class and dominating group discussions. The LEAD class is for the students, not the facilitators.

During the second week we each worked with one other individual to present one or more sections of the LEAD class to the other participants and the instructors. The feedback provided by the participants and the instructors is an important part of becoming a facilitator.

Feedback continues after certification because each of the participants in a LEAD class has the opportunity to submit comments about each facilitator. I look forward

For more information about OLE, feel free to contact any or all of the district's recent attendee's; Marc Kodack, Mike Thompson or Lloyd Coakley. For information on the LEAD-TTT, contact Marc Kodack or Patti Carr (ext. 8541).



# New employees



**Joy Nesbit, RE**



**Pat Augustyniak, PM-P**



**William T. Lawler, CO-M**



**Jacquelyn Arbeiter, IM-I**





# District Coming Events

## **Carlyle Lake**

Oct. 20-21 - Haunted Trail

Nov. 5 - IDNR Youth Pheasant Hunt

Dec. 1 - Christmastown USA & Lighting of the Visitor Center

## **Wappapello Lake**

Sept. 16-17 - 9th Annual Old Greenville Days

Nov. 25 - Dec. 25 - 8th Annual Festival of Light Christmas Auto Tour

## **Rend Lake**

Sept. 23 - Rend Lake Cleanup

## **Lake Shelbyville**

Oct. 7-8 - Fall Colors Hike

Oct 28 - Lithia Springs Trail of Terror

TBA - Vitorian Splendor Light Festival

## **Mark Twain Lake**

Sept. 2-3 - North American Bullriding Association World Championship Finals

Sept. 22 - Environmental Education Fair

Oct. 7-8 - Missouri Mule Days

## **Clover (continued)**

tows into an opening that is only 110 feet wide. The jumbo tanker barges are up to 108 feet wide leaving only two feet to spare (that's one foot on each side). The lock operators extract the first set of nine barges out by building momentum with a winch as they float out with only deckhands to stop them with lines. The sound of a shotgun blast to a hunter is music to his ears. To a lock operator it spells big problems. That same noise is heard when a lock line fails and is slung like a rubber band. If one is in the line of fire, it means loss of life or limb. Connecting the tows back together at the coupling and lashing cables like shoe strings with steamboat ratchets is the next danger. All this takes time, and to see it done one time after another as they try to face the two sets of barges back together, hearing the sound of metal rubbing and twisting as the tow is reattached, and watching the deckhands trying to avoid fingers being crushed and toes smashed as

they perform their task is just another day in the life of a lock operator. He sees it all, and some times more than he wants to see. This is a serious and dangerous business, and the dangers are well known to both the navigation industry and those who operate the locks, but it is vital to our country. Our tonnage graph looks like a staircase with yearly increases from 1940 on. But now we are near the maximum in our capability, and have been for years. When you push anything to its maximum, you are asking for increased dangers. In the larger (1200 foot) lock chambers the

majority of these dangers are gone. But we keep pushing the pedal to the metal and all our people will do their best. Next time you see a fully loaded tow seemingly just cruisin' down the river, stop and think of all the people who put their lives on the line daily while transiting through and at our lock system.

All those who keep the locks working and the river traffic moving are to be commended for their dedication to duty and excellent safety record. Bernie Clover is indeed the current hero, but, according to him, it's all in a day's work.





# Employee/Member Self Service: Q&A (EMSS)

**1) WHAT IS EMPLOYEE/MEMBER SELF SERVICE (E/MSS)?**

Employee/Member Self Service is an innovative automated system that puts Department of Defense employees/members in control of processing certain discretionary pay data without using paper forms.

**2) WHY USE EMPLOYEE/MEMBER SELF SERVICE?**

It saves time - E/MSS eliminates the need for completing and submitting forms by replacing them with user friendly technology.

It is convenient - Employees/Members can access E/MSS 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for changing or reviewing current information.

It is reliable - E/MSS has the same procedural checks for accuracy as paper forms.

**3) HOW IS EMPLOYEE/MEMBER SELF SERVICE ACCESSED?**

The system can be accessed by touch-tone phone and the Internet. For security reasons, cellular phones are not recommended.

**4) WHEN IS EMPLOYEE/MEMBER SELF SERVICE AVAILABLE?**

E/MSS is available nearly 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**5) WHAT TRANSACTIONS CAN BE PERFORMED?**

A variety of discretionary payroll transactions can be made. Here are the transactions which will be available in phase 1: Financial Allotments (not applicable to annuitants), Direct Deposits, Federal Taxes and Home Address.

**6) WHEN ARE THE ACTIONS MADE EFFECTIVE?**

Upon completion and acceptance of an action, E/MSS will display a "NO LATER THAN" date. You may verify the change to your account by

accessing E/MSS three to seven business days after a change has been made.

**7) HOW DOES AN EMPLOYEE/MEMBER KNOW THE TRANSACTION WAS PROCESSED?**

In keeping with streamlining efforts and to reduce paper, E/MSS takes advantage of existing technology and is paperless, and no written confirmation will be received. The change you have made to your account should be posted no later than 7 business days after you make the change. At that time, you can access E/MSS and verify that your account reflects your change. If your change is not reflected on your account, contact your customer service representative.

For active duty and reserve members, and civilians, you may check your Leave and Earnings Statement to verify that your change was processed.

For retirees, if you input a change to your Allotments or Federal Tax Withholding Amount, you will receive a Retiree Account Statement in the mail reflecting the change in your net pay. For annuitants, you will receive a pay statement in the mail each time there is a change made to your account.

**8) WHEN I CHANGE MY HOME ADDRESS, WILL IT AFFECT THE ADDRESS OF BONDS THAT ARE SENT TO MY HOME?**

For civilian personnel, an address on a bond that is identical to your home address may automatically change when the home address is changed. Check with your servicing payroll office to verify the address where your bonds are to be mailed. For all other Employees/Members, a change in your home address will not affect the address of your bonds.

**9) I AM IN A TAX EXEMPT STATUS, HOW DOES THIS AFFECT**

**CHANGES I WISH TO MAKE TO MY FEDERAL TAXES?**

For civilian employees, if you have filed a W4 to be in a tax exempt status you will not be allowed to make federal tax changes.

For all military members and retirees, E/MSS allows federal tax exemption changes.

**10) WHEN I ENTER AN AMOUNT IN THE FEDERAL TAX WITHHOLDING AMOUNT BLOCK, HOW MUCH MONEY WILL BE DEDUCTED FROM MY PAY EACH PAYDAY?**

If you are a civilian employee, the total amount you enter will be deducted each payday. For other members, the amount you enter will be deducted each month, (one-half each payday for those who have two paydays per month).

**1) WHO CAN CHANGE FINANCIAL ALLOTMENTS?**

At this time, all active Marine Corps members, all military retirees, and all civilians can change their financial/discretionary allotments. Financial allotments do not pertain to annuitants. Other military members will be able to change financial allotments in the future.

**12) IS THERE A MAXIMUM AMOUNT TO WHICH I CAN INCREASE A FINANCIAL ALLOTMENT? E/MSS will allow eligible employees/members to increase a financial allotment to any amount as long as it will not exceed the amount of available net pay.**

**13) HOW MANY FINANCIAL ALLOTMENTS MAY I START?**

For civilian employees, E/MSS will allow an employee to start a maximum of two financial allotments. Overseas allotments will be addressed in a

*(Continued on next page)*





future phase. Other employees/members authorized to have allotments deducted from their pay are limited by DoD regulations in the number of allotments they may start.

14) **WHAT SHOULD AN EMPLOYEE/MEMBER DO IF HE/SHE LATER DETERMINES THEIR CHANGE WAS INCORRECT, OR WAS NOT THE CHANGE THEY INTENDED TO MAKE?**

Employees/members **MUST** use the same method as previously used to make the change; either Employee/Member Self Service, or the paper form, but not both.

#### **SYSTEM SECURITY**

15) **HOW SAFE IS THE SYSTEM?**

The unique combination of SSN, PIN, and a DOD-specific telephone number for IVR needed to access E/MSS makes it very secure. E/MSS employees/members must use a browser with Secure Socket Layer (SSL) protocol with 128-bit encryption software (strong encryption). This combination prevents information from being retrieved during transmission.

16) **WHAT BROWSERS CAN BE USED TO ACCESS THIS SITE?**

Currently, Netscape Navigator version 3.0, 4.01 or later, Microsoft Internet Explorer version 4.0 or later; and Netscape Communicator are being used.

17) **CAN I USE THE BROWSER PROVIDED BY MY INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER?**

If you are using a Web browser provided by your Internet service provider or on-line service, the full security capabilities of Employee/Member Self Service may not be utilized. A few examples of service providers are America On-Line, Prodigy, CompuServe, and The Microsoft Network. We recommend that you use the official Microsoft Internet Explorer available from [WWW.MICROSOFT.COM](http://WWW.MICROSOFT.COM) or Netscape

Navigator available from [WWW.NETSCAPE.COM](http://WWW.NETSCAPE.COM). Employee/Member Self Service only supports browsers with JavaScript and strong encryption enabled.

18) **WHAT IS 128 BIT ENCRYPTION?**

In order to use the E/MSS Web site, you must use a Web browser that supports Secure Socket Layers (SSL) protocol with 128 bit encryption software (strong encryption) and JavaScript enabled. This prevents information from being read by others on the Internet while it is being transmitted between your Web browser and the Employee/Member Self Service Web site. We recommend that you use the Netscape Navigator version 3.0, 4.01 or higher; or Microsoft Internet Explorer version 4.0, or higher.

19) **HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE 128 BIT ENCRYPTION?**

See your system administrator, check the manual, use the help option, or call/e-mail your Internet provider for support.

20) **WHERE CAN I GET A 128 BIT BROWSER?**

Microsoft Internet Explorer is available from [WWW.MICROSOFT.COM](http://WWW.MICROSOFT.COM); Netscape Navigator is available from [WWW.NETSCAPE.COM](http://WWW.NETSCAPE.COM).

21) **HOW DO I ENABLE JAVASCRIPT?**

For all browsers, see your system administrator, check the manual, use the help option, or call/e-mail your Internet provider for support.

22) **WHAT IS CACHE/CACHING?**

Browsers typically store/save/cache pages displayed on your monitor to your hard disk. Caching can allow others to see your personal information if they have access to your machine. When you are operating in the SSL mode, this automatic saving, or caching, can be turned off. You should always verify caching is turned off

before using Employee/Member Self Service.

#### **AFTER GETTING TO THE SITE**

23) **I SEE ONLY A "NO" BUTTON; WHY DON'T I SEE A "YES" BUTTON?**

If you do not see a button that says YES and a green check mark, your browser does not support 128 bit SSL encryption. If you are unable to use 128 bit encryption, use the E/MSS Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS).

24) **WHY DOES THE ATTENTION PAGE POP UP AND GO AWAY QUICKLY?**

This is normal with E/MSS, your browser supports JavaScript. It pops up and goes away because there is a graphic on the page which takes a few seconds to load. If the attention page stays there and does not go away, it is because JavaScript is not enabled, E/MSS only supports browsers with JavaScript and strong encryption enabled.

25) **WHEN I SELECT MY ACCOUNT, NOTHING HAPPENS. WHY?**

You have to select the blue button rather than the account name.

26) **WHY ISN'T MY PAY SYSTEM LISTED?**

The pay system that services your account does not currently support Employee/Member Self Service, or your account is not currently active.

27) **WHY CAN'T I ENTER MY FULL SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?**

Dashes and special characters are not allowed. Type only the numbers in your Social Security Number.

28) **I AM A MACINTOSH USER, WHY DO I SEE ONLY BLACK?**

You must tell the browser that the background should be light not dark

29) **WHY DO I KEEP GETTING**

*(Continued on page 12)*



## Trip (continued)

partnering effort brings scientists out of the lab and onto the river to brainstorm and network with their colleagues and partners.

This years water-based conference was lead by river engineer and hydraulics chief Claude Strauser. During the boat trip, Strauser addressed such topics as constructing underwater habitats with wood donated by industry and creating and modifying structures such as chevron dikes and notches to divert more river water into the main channel. High water in the side channels since the flood of 1993 has resulted in an excessively low water level in the main channel, making dredging a common necessity. Strauser and his team have continually stepped to the for front to assist in measures of keeping the Mississippi environmentally sound,



**Dan Erickson, CO-N, discusses a side channel plan he developed for the Middle Mississippi**

safe for species and boaters and productive for vessels.

This annual river collaboration has led to a number of successes that include "The Environmental River Engineering Project on the Mississippi and the Environmental Pool Management Plan. In 1992 and again in 1996 the St. Louis District won the Federal Design Achievement award, the highest award given by the National Endowments for the Arts, in recognition of the Corps'

Environmental River Engineering Project on the Mississippi. "Our Job is to make sure that the river and its environment is here years from now so our grandchildren can enjoy the beauty and the recreation."



**Claude Strauser explains a potential solution to a navigation problem near Iowa Island-Bolter's Bar Reach in Pool 26 to Joyce Collins of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services**



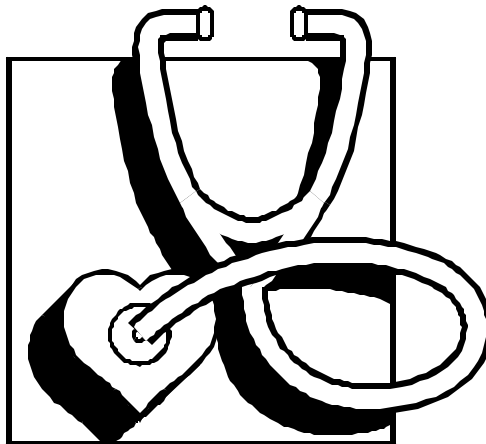
# New Federal Health Insurance Program

As the Office of Personnel Management prepares for the 2000 open season for the Federal Employees Health Benefits program, scheduled November 13 through December 11, federal workers and retirees are still waiting for important, final details to be settled. The most important piece of information, for many enrollees, is how much the premiums will be in 2001.

OPM has predicted that premiums will raise an average of 8.7 percent for 2001 but that doesn't mean every health plan will increase its fees. While some plan costs may rise 8.7 percent or more, as in previous years, some plans may actually decrease their premiums. The rising premiums of the last few years are largely attributed to the increased cost of prescription drugs, OPM says, a factor over which the agency has little control. Actual premium costs for individual plans will be known later this year after OPM finishes negotiations with the health insurers.

A second important piece of information many enrollees are waiting for is what plans will be available in their area. While some plans are available nationwide, most health maintenance organizations (HMOs) are only available in a specific geographic area. Over the past several years, HMOs have been dropping out of the FEHBP, reducing the options for enrollees outside of large metropolitan areas.

In 1994, 74 HMOs left the program, and another 62 left in 2000. Some withdrawals were caused by plans adding, splitting, and merging their service areas. HMO representatives also cite insufficient enrollments, unpredictable plan utilization, excessive



risk, and non-competitive premium rates as their reasons for leaving. However, OPM maintains that the loss of HMOs in 2000 only affected about 64,000 federal workers and retirees (or less than 2 percent) of FEHBP enrollees.

A program that begins in October will help to take some of the pinch off of rising health care costs for active employees. Called premium conversion, the program allows federal workers to pay their health premium costs out of pre-tax dollars, thus lowering their overall tax bill. OPM officials say the average federal employee can save \$550 per year with the program.

The program, however, is not available to retirees, a fact noted by the National Association of Retired Federal Employees. NARFE supports a bill (H.R. 4277) that would extend the premium conversion program to federal retirees, military members and retirees, and legislative branch employees. But the bill has had no movement since its April introduction and is currently sitting in House subcommittee.

Another issue surrounding the FEHBP that has NARFE officials alert is a desire by some lawmakers to add medical savings accounts (MSAs) to the FEHBP. MSAs combine low-

premium, high deductible catastrophic plans with tax-favored savings accounts. Participants can use funds in their MSAs to pay specified costs, up to an out-of-pocket cap. NARFE believes that MSAs will only appeal to relatively healthy enrollees leaving the government and less healthy participants to pay higher premiums for comprehensive plans.

A compromise version of a "Patients' Bill of Rights" that includes the addition of MSAs to the federal health program has passed the Senate and NARFE officials are carefully watching how this amendment plays out in a House-Senate conference committee.

## CONGRATULATIONS

by Charles Camillo

Congratulations to Public Affairs (Student trainee) Mrs. Lattissua D. Tyler for successfully completing her undergraduate degree in Public Administration with academic honors. She graduated with a cumulative grade point average of 3.7, which many of us would consider to be no small defeat, while being a wife, mother to three beautiful boys, working full-time and being a full-time student. When asked how she did it, she simply said, "Family, love, determination, dedication and knowing that you did not do it alone. There's always a higher power at work." The 23 year-old will pursue a Master of Public Policy Administration at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in fall of 2001 and her ultimate goal is to eventually earn a Doctorate in Public Administration. We here at the St. Louis District consider ourselves to be the Gateway to Excellence and this young lady truly signifies that, Excellence. Congratulations



# TIPS FROM THE RM TEAM

by Jean Kuethe and Christiane Bonucchi

## TRAVEL CARD INFORMATION

A. The government travel card is available to employees who travel on official business. As a minimum, travelers should use the Government issued travel card for all lodging and transportation expenses. Travelers should use the card to obtain an ATM advance for incidental expenses and meals where the card may not be accepted.

B. When applying for a card contact Jean Kuethe (agency program coordinator) or Chris Bonucchi (alternate). You will be given an application package. The application package contains the following documents:

1. Agreement between Department of Defense Employee and Bank of America – read and retain this agreement for your records.
2. Statement of Understanding – read and completes this form. Initial by all of the provisions, sign, and date the form. Have your supervisor sign and date the form.
3. Application Form. – Complete the portion titled “to be completed by the employee”. Have your supervisor sign and date the appropriate block provided on the bottom of the application form (page 2).
4. Submit the completed statement of understanding and application forms to Jean Kuethe (RM). Bank of America will not process incomplete or illegible application packages, therefore, any packages that are incomplete/illegible will be returned. The card should arrive within two weeks after RM-F receives your forms.

C. You should receive three mailings from Bank of America:

1. Your card receipt verification code – you need this code when you call the 1-800 number on the card to

- activate it.
2. The card. Be on the lookout for this since it comes in a plain white envelope without the Bank of America logo. It could be mistaken for junk mail.
3. Your PIN number. This is needed for ATM cash advances.

If you do not receive these mailing within two weeks, please notify either Jean Kuethe or Chris Bonucchi.

D. By activating, signing or using the card the traveler agrees to be bound by the terms and conditions of the Department of Defense Government Travel Card policy and procedures.

1. The cardholder should use the government travel charge card for payments of expenses for official government travel. The card is not available for personal use.
2. The cardholder is responsible for all charges made with the Card.
3. The cardholder is responsible for making payments by the due date specified on the statement.
4. Bank of America suspends a cardholder from charging privileges when an account becomes 61 days delinquent. The suspended account is usually reinstated upon full payment.

E. ATM advances for standard cardholders are limited to \$500 per month, and \$200 per month if you were issued a restricted card. If you are on extended TDY (standard card-more than 2 weeks; restricted card-more than 1 week) you will need to contact either Jean Kuethe or Chris Bonucchi for a temporary increase in your advance limit. It takes Bank of America at least overnight to process any increases.

F. BankAmerica has a quasi-generic card design that resembles a business style credit card and does not have the US Government logo on it. It only has the VISA logo and

the words “business cards” on it.

Issuance of the quasi-generic card is limited to cardholders traveling to foreign countries where identification of the US Government could be compromising.

G. If you are transferring either from or to the St. Louis District be sure to contact us so we can transfer your card account. This is important to avoid problems when traveling, such as the card being declined because your account has been closed out. The travel card must be canceled when you leave employment with the Department of Defense.

## EMSS (continued)

A “DOMAIN NOT FOUND” ERROR? Check that you are typing the URL (location) correctly. Also, there could be a problem with the domain service, or the connection link you are using.

### ABOUT PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

30) WHAT INFORMATION IS NEEDED TO USE EMPLOYEE/MEMBER SELF SERVICE? In order to access E/MSS, an employee/member needs his/her Social Security Number (SSN) and Personal Identification Number (PIN). Depending on the transaction, employees/members will need additional information. The E/MSS system provides instructions online, or the servicing payroll office or customer service representative can provide additional information.

31) HOW DOES AN EMPLOYEE/MEMBER GET A PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (PIN)? A temporary PIN will be mailed to you. After you sign on initially, you will be required to customize your PIN for future use.

32) CAN THE PIN BE CHANGED? To change your PIN, you will need to select the Change PIN Option from the Main Menu. You will be required to enter your New PIN twice.





# Alive and Kicking: The Missouri Mule

By Mary A. Heitmeyer

The traveling exhibit *Alive and Kicking: The Missouri Mule*, Then and now examines the historical development, present uses, and folklore surrounding the Missouri mule. This exhibit was developed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Missouri State Museum and the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center at the University of Missouri. It will be on display at the M.W. Boudreau Visitor Center beginning the week after Labor Day through October 8, 2000 as part of Mark Twain Lake's Missouri Mule Days event scheduled for October 7-8, 2000. (The following information provided by the State Museum).

What creature can have no offspring but continue to have more of its kind born? The Missouri Mule.

The mule, reputed to be the most stubborn animal alive, is the hybrid offspring of a male donkey (jack) and a female horse (mare). Because of this genetic cross, the mules cannot reproduce; every mule must have a donkey and a horse for parents. The result is an animal with the horse's massive size and weight, and the donkey's features, intelligence, agility, and endurance. This combination created an animal highly suitable for farm work in the 19th century.



In 1821, William Becknell led the first trading party along the Santa Fe Trail from Missouri to Santa Fe and returned with Mexican donkeys, mules, and silver - wealth for the new state of Missouri. Missouri mules, bred from the Mexican donkeys and American mares, were frequently used to pull wagons west to Oregon and California.

Mules were also used to expand the cotton kingdom of the South. Before the Civil War, more than half the mules in the United States were employed on cotton plantations. Missouri mules were driven overland and shipped south on steamboats to fill the need. In addition, the mules provided power for America's developing coal, lead, and logging industries.

The demand for Missouri's large, docile mules, stronger than the small mules reared in Kentucky and Tennessee, continued to increase. In fact, from 1870 to 1900, Missouri bred more mules than any other state in the

nation, and Callaway County claimed the title of Mule Capital of the World. Missouri farmers could earn \$60 or \$70 for each young mule, at a time when the average farm income was scarcely \$700 a year.

Besides meeting most of the demand for mules in the United States, Missouri also supplied buyers from throughout the world. When mules owned by W. Elgin of Platte County swept the competition at the 1904 St. Louis World' Fair, the term Missouri Mule entered the American vocabulary. These Missouri mules served the United States and her allies during both world wars.

The mule story is more than tall tales and bravado. It is the history of rural life and the family farm. At one time, 45 percent of Missouri farmers were involved in using or breeding mules. Although the tractor has driven the mule off the farm, the animals are still popular in other areas, including forestry and recreation.



Ranger Willie B. Safe

## Dorm Safety

by Lattissua Tyler

With in the next few weeks, school will be starting for many. Parents hurry trying to stock pile supplies for the back to schoolers. The never ending search for the one shirt that is "just right" for these shoes or the must have or "I'll die" designer jeans. In the midst of the confusion of elementary and secondary education, we sometimes overlook our more mature child who's either leaving for the first time or who is returning to college. Their basic needs are normally being met by a credit to their account or a check in the mail. Because of this, it is easy to lose track of their well-being or personal safety.

Last year, hundreds of Seton Hall University students looked on as fire consumed their dormitory. There were no sprinklers in the New Jersey dormitory. Days later, there were two more notable dormitory fires, one at Miami university and one at Heidelberg College, both in Ohio. According to the United States Fire Administration, arson, cooking, smoking and candles appear to be the main causes of the 1,700 college fires that occur annually.

After a Fire Administration conference on campus safety, one conclusion was that parents need to get involved and ask questions. Does the dormitory have a sprinkler system? Is there a fire safety program that includes regular fire drills? Are fire exits



accessible? Sometimes the main problem is kids think they are invincible. Freshman, who are the least experienced in independent living are often housed in the oldest facilities which are most likely to have fire hazards, suggest the Health and Environmental Management Association. Campus fires are preventable. You can help by discussing the causes and dangers with your college students, with alumni and administrators.



# Safety First

## VEHICLE CRASHES: Leading cause of worker deaths

Buckle up; obey traffic signals; keep your eyes on the road; on and on it goes. Bored? You shouldn't be.

This story should be more exciting than any thriller you see on TV. That's because you are a member of the cast. When someone gets killed, that someone could be you. Have you seen pictures of people pouring molten steel, people operating huge machines, or walking 10 stories up on a catwalk? Bet you're glad you don't have such a dangerous job. But you probably do. If you drive a truck, make a delivery, drive to another office or do anything involving a motor vehicle, you are doing something that is statistically more dangerous than most jobs that are considered to be hazardous.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of work-related death among U.S. workers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Most fatally injured workers were drivers (76 percent); 14 percent were pedestrians; 9 percent were passengers. Among fatally injured drivers and passengers, 62 percent were not using and type of safety restraint. The message is clear: safety first.



## To your health

New research shows that adults who take a walk every day are less likely to have a stroke. The brisker the walk, the more the benefit. Researchers say that both men and women most likely would reap the same benefits. These findings stem from analysis of questionnaires on physical activity completed by more 72,000 women who participated in the Nurses Health Study, which has tracked more than 121,000 American women for the past quarter-century. None of the participants had evidence of heart disease or cancer when the study began. In the eight years that researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health followed the nurses, they documented 258 cases of ischemic stroke, 109 strokes caused by hemorrhage and 40 strokes of unknown cause. Ischemic strokes, which account for about 80 percent of all strokes, occur when an artery supplying blood to the brain becomes blocked by a blood clot. The clot slows or stops blood flow and causes what's known as a "brain attack." However, nurses who walked at a normal or moderate pace every day had less risk of having a stroke, and even less risk when they walked vigorously, says researcher Dr. Frank Hu, an assistant professor of nutrition at Harvard. Results of the study appear in a recent issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. "The role of exercise is not well established in preventing strokes," Hu says. At least a half-hour of brisk walking and 45 minutes of moderate walking each day produced the protective effect, he says. "Each 3.5-hour-a-week increase in moderate to vigorous activity was associated with a 19 percent reduction in total strokes and a 29 percent



reduction in ischemic strokes. Even moderate walking lowers the risk of stroke by lowering blood pressure and blood cholesterol," Hu says. "People need to understand that ischemic stroke is similar to heart disease caused by atherosclerosis." Atherosclerosis is the buildup of fatty substances on the walls of blood vessels, resulting in a thickening and hardening of the arteries. About 600,000 Americans will have a stroke this year and 16,000 of them will die, according to the American Stroke Association. Stroke is the No. 3 killer in the United States and one of the leading causes of disability. Hu states that exercise and walking also reduce "the risk for Type II diabetes, which is a problem in strokes. Exercise causes weight loss and maintenance and is known to improve insulin sensitivity. Even women who become active later in life have a lower stroke risk than their sedentary counterparts. Older adults can enjoy

the benefit of exercise even if they were sedentary for a long time. There is nothing physiologically different in men and women that would change the protective effect." Dr. Ralph Sacco, associate chairman of neurology at Columbia University in New York City, welcomes the findings. "I think one of the take-home messages is that something as simple as walking — adopting that kind of healthy behavior — has a major impact on stroke reduction," Sacco says. "It's good news, it's confirmatory news and it's news from an outstanding study. We found in a study we did on the elderly, published in *Stroke* in 1998, that exercise was equally protective in men and women," he says. "People should get out there and exercise," Sacco says. "You don't have to be a marathon runner. Take a walk for 20 minutes a day, three times a week, and you will definitely see the benefit of this behavior."



## Retiree Review

The retirees met on July 20th at the Salad Bowl, and, as usual, had a great time. Regulars, the Scheuermanns, Bockhorsts, Kalafatishs, etc. were in attendance. We welcomed new attendees Larry and Sharon McCarthy, and new first timer—Mary Lou Lawson.

Lew Scheuermann reported that he had been with the Huizengas and the Bakers recently. Jim and his wife were in from San Diego, where Jim is developing into a senior golf pro. He now has his own golf cart and to keep it in mechanical order, he uses it every day. Naturally, he takes his clubs along to make the use realistic. Lew reported that Elmer was a little under the weather. Maybe it is age, since it was reported that when Elmer was employed at the District, he found the residence that Robert E. Lee lived in when he was the District Engineer. Bob Maxwell was the story teller of the day.

Mark your calenders for the 17 August luncheon at 11:00 a.m. It is rumored that Colonel Morrow, District Engineer, plans to attend. Lets have a good turnout. Hope to see you there.

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*The Southern Area Office has moved from their previous location at 339 Broadway, in Cape Girardeau to 133 West Main in Jackson, MO. Their new telephone number is (537 )204-7770.*



New signs being placed at the Southern Area Office's new site

